

Reporter 8/3/88

Hansen accuses mayor of mishandling

With television cameras and all eyes in the crowded Palos Hills city hall watching, resident Charles "Chic" Hansen lambasted Mayor Gerald Bennett, accusing him of mishandling landfill practices at a new park currently under development.

"The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not cited this city for any violation. They merely sent us a letter of inquiry. We have every intention of cooperating to the fullest," Bennett retorted to Hansen at the Thursday night meeting.

Hansen, a long time antagonist to Bennett, called Alderman Ed Jones a "buffoon" and called Stoney Creek Park

"illegal." He contacted WGN-TV and summoned a television news crew to videotape his accusations at the Aug. 6 council meeting.

"You forced me to go public," he declared to Bennett.

Since 1976 the city has owned 19 acres of vacant land west of Roberts Road near 108th Street. The land is being cleared and graded by public works crews under the direction of Commissioners George Lutz and Parks Director Bill Murphy.

"You told us, Mayor, that only clean fill has been dumped in there," Hansen said into a mini-cam. "But the state EPA

Continued on page 5

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency field inspector Gino Bruni surveys the site visit to the land last week. Bruni made his first inspection trip in June.

Hansen

continued from page 1

sent an inspection report and some fill is illegal. Not all things are done right. I pray we don't find anything toxic."

Hansen said he attempted to discuss the matter privately with officials who "turned a deaf ear" to him. Hansen claimed that there are tons of asphalt and steel on top of the landfill area.

"Let's talk about the issues, not that Chic Hansen is an ex-convict who has been around here for 12 years," Hansen said. He later supported Alderman John Jordan by criticizing Bennett and Jones for "chastising" Jordan at a previous meeting. Alderwoman Pauline Stratton made a motion which allowed Hansen extra time to deliver his speech.

Mayor Bennett responded, "If a permit is required, we will gladly obtain one. We have no problem. What bothers me is that the press called me about the EPA letter before I saw it. I don't care to have the issue debated before we receive all the facts."

"We are trying to build a park, something positive for the whole city," he added. Another park site under development, 45 acres west of Harlem Avenue near 105th Street, is also going to be fully improved, according to the mayor.

Resident Michael Wunder stated, "So far, all I've heard about is the dumping of asphalt and steel in there. How does that constitute a health hazard? I think somebody is making a mountain out of a molehill."

Also on the formal agenda last week was "miscellaneous business" where aldermanic jousting continued. Jordan read from a prepared statement which

Ald. Jones, and exorbitant expenditures," Jones did not reply.

Jordan said he listened to numerous tapes of past meetings and found no evidence of his attacking other council members. He paused for challenging comments and got none. "In 10 meetings beginning May 17th, Jones missed nine of them, plus one and three quarter executive sessions," Jordan said.

"I had to sit through his (requests for expense reimbursement) for a \$300 portable telephone, golf tickets for \$136.78 and for alleged lunch expenses of \$65.45 when Jones was out with friends and claimed to be with Community Resource Department personnel. He attempted to make the taxpayers foot the bill," Jordan said.

"I don't answer to anyone but the people of the first ward, and certainly not to blankety blank Ed Jones. Fill in your own blanks," he said to a round of applause from the audience.

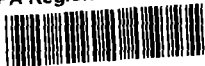
On another issue, Alderwoman Pauline Stratton blocked a motion for consideration made by Alderman Steve Shinkus which, if passed unanimously by the board, could have led toward the amendment of an existing salary ordinance to include the new position of planning director.

That position, which pays \$400 per month, was filled last month by Dan Scurek, Stratton's aldermanic predecessor. The amendment is necessary to establish compensation for that position. According to Shinkus, its omission on the salary ordinance was merely a typing error, and the council had previously approved the position.

The topic is likely to be debatable at the next council meeting.

Stratton also lost her bid to recoup \$129.14 for printing and postage expenses she incurred when she sent a special committee to the attack made by

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Letters to the Editor

Hansen calls officials to task

Dear Editor,

For the last 2½ to 3 years there has been much controversy between Palos Hills residents and some of our city officials over 2 land sites in the city of Palos Hills: one site called Stoney Creek Park West (108th & Roberts Road) and the other called Stoney Creek Park East (108th & 75th Avenue). These two sites combined cover approximately 60 acres.

Most of the controversy, if not all of it, centers around our city officials (namely Mayor Bennett, George Lutz of the Public Works Department, and Bill Murphy, Commissioner of Parks). The Mayor stated at the city's last committee meeting that many people were going to apologize to the city and the city council about calling these sites "dumps" and that he was damn mad. The Mayor's right. There are a lot of apologies owed to this city, but he's the one that should apologize. This is all happening under his tenure.

Mr. Lutz, to date, has not given the public records that were asked for in writing that would tell who has been using our park sites as a dump, and what has been dumped in these sites.

Mr. Murphy said, "No matter what they do, it isn't going to stop us. This is going to be a park."

For almost a decade the citizens of Palos Hills have been promised that these 2 sites would be made into parks. But, to date, these sites are still undeveloped and are now being looked at as illegal landfills by the E.P.A., the

Division of Water Resources, the Illinois Department of Conservation, the Better Government Association, and the Attorney General's office.

Mayor Bennett has said that only "clean fill" has been brought in to these sites. By what right does Mayor Bennett, Mr. Lutz, or Mr. Murphy make such statements? Do they think they're above the law? Weren't they supposed to contact the proper authorities? Weren't they supposed to obtain the proper permits? The amount of debris dumped on these sites was not an accident. It was all supposed to have been done under proper supervision.

The Mayor, Mr. Lutz, and Mr. Murphy were all contacted by many residents numerous times regarding these sites but our pleas fell on deaf ears. To the gentlemen we say, "Whoever fears to submit any question to the test of free discussion, loves his own opinion more than the truth."

All of the aforementioned outside agencies have been contacted—contacted because some of our city officials would not listen to the cries of the people.

Charles Chic Hansen
Palos Hills

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